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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004425

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: (C) KURDISH TNA MEMBER'S MOSQUE SPEECHES SILENCED

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S.
Ford for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. Summary. According to TNA member Ahmed Wahab Majeed, the Kurdish Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs informed him that he could no longer be an imam in his mosque in Irbil. The Ministry's decision is purportedly based on Article 28(A) that states that TNA members "may not be appointed to any other position in or out of government." Ahmed Wahab is a critic of government corruption countrywide, so this is not the first time that he has run afoul of the authorities with his mosque speeches. However, the KRG seems to have found a legal provision in the TAL that requires him to withdraw from his imam position. End Summary

2. (C) TNA and Constitutional Committee member Ahmed Wahab Majeed told Poloff on October 19 that the Kurdish Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, under the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), sent him a letter on August 17 informing him that he can no longer be an imam in his mosque in Irbil. The letter reportedly tells him that, as an Assembly member, he cannot have more than one government position.

3. (U) Article 28(A) of the TAL states, "Members of the National Assembly ... may not be appointed to any other position in or out of government." In Iraq, the Ministry of Awqaf appoints the imams of many (but not all) mosques and pays their salaries. The Kurdish Ministry of Awqaf maintains a similar role in the Kurdish region.

4. (C) Ahmed Wahab said he has been talking in general terms about government corruption countrywide in his mosque speeches. He said that as a Muslim, he must speak out on these issues.

5. (C) Ahmed Wahab is a member of the Kurdistan Islamic Union party, which is part of the Kurdish Alliance and which has six seats in the TNA and nine in the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA), the Kurdish regional parliament. According to him, the Kurdish Ministry of Awqaf issued a similar letter to Kurdistan Islamic Union Party member Anwar Muhammad Ghafur, an imam in Irbil who is also a member of the KNA.

6. (C) According to Ahmed Wahab, this is the third such time that he has been ordered to be silent in the mosque: first under Saddam Hussein, when he was an imam at a mosque in Baghdad in the 1980s, and second from 1999 until 2003, when he was an imam in Irbil.

7. (C) Comment. We know of at least one other practicing mosque imam in the TNA - Shia cleric Jalal ad-Din as-Sagheer from the popular Baratha mosque in north Baghdad. We know of no effort to compel him to resign his position at the Baratha mosque. The KRG's tougher line stance, by contrast, may result from its trying to separate religion and state more clearly; the Kurdish authorities are wary of Islamist influence in government. It may also result from a KRG desire to stifle a critic of government corruption. Ahmed Wahab stressed to us that he attacks corruption nationally, not just in Kurdistan. The KRG may feel that it cannot order him directly not to preach, as it did in 1999. Instead, the KRG seems to have found a legal provision in the TAL that appears to require that Wahab not continue to hold his imam position. Satterfield